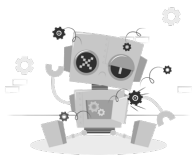


**WHEN LIFE
ISN'T WORKING**



MASTER



Session 1: Filters

The battle for hearts and minds is no longer simply a battle over truth.

We don't just speak words, we send messages.

Proverbs 23:6-8—“Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies. For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you but his heart is not with you. The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words” (All quotes from the NKJV).

What message does the miser send? How often do people miss the miser's message?

The word translated “thinks” comes from a root word that means to act as a gatekeeper.

There is no other place in Scripture where this word is translated “thinks.”

I often use the word driver when working with people.

What is your driver? What do you care about at the deepest level? What are the gatekeepers of your heart?

This driver is actually the best picture we have of who God created us to be.

The commonly used language for this concept is core values.

A person thinks inside of his core values.

A person's gatekeepers act as a filter for messages being sent and received.

Why would the miser tell the people to eat? He wants to accumulate more money!

Why would the person feel the need to vomit up the morsel? Because he finally saw the miser's heart!

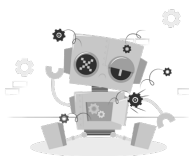
The gatekeepers also filter what is coming into a person.

Activity:

Most of the discussion today will be limited to one person at your table. We want to start by taking a few moments to get to know that person better.

1. Share a middle school memory with your table partner.
2. Does this memory say anything about what you cared about at that time? Why do you think that memory came to mind for you to share? What might have triggered that memory?

Matthew 6:22-24—“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”



This verse is not talking about a physical eye, but a point of view or a spiritual filter.

A modern word often used for this filter is worldview.

Is a miser's decisions driven by his thinking, or is it his deeper desires?

Most people's filters are not in place because of their thoughts. Their thoughts are in place because of their filters!

Truth is needed to clean up these filters, but not just doctrinal truth. Applied truth is needed.

Proverbs 16:2 "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits."

Proverbs 21:2 "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts."

Because of ego (wanting to feel good about ourselves), we are all blind to self.

Even those who have great insight into others cannot see themselves with the same accuracy.

At the first sign of openness, this applied truth of being blind to self should be one of the first things we teach people.

Activity:

1. Share some experiences from the last week about a person who was closed to you and a person who was open to you.
2. How did you know that person was open or closed? Do you have any insight into why the person was open or closed to you? Share any thoughts.

Matthew 5:3—"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The spiritual condition of people is constantly changing.

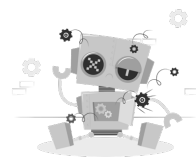
The term spiritual presence is used to describe the different ways we react to our world.

Our spirit acts as a temple (1 Cor. 6:19), housing spiritual presence.

We are designed to be a home for the Holy Spirit, continually connecting with His presence.

Our ability to connect spiritually with God means that we can also sense and be impacted by other spiritual presences. This includes spiritual messages sent by people.

Some people have a much higher level of this spiritual sensitivity than others.



Some people are more solidly entrenched in a consistent spiritual location. As a culture, we have a low level of spiritual sensitivity.

When life is not working, people hit a place of brokenness.

If brokenness results in humility, people are more open to receive from God and others.

Truth is not as important during these moments as godly spiritual nurturing.

If a person is receiving God's life from others, he will likely move at least temporarily to a new spiritual location.

We think, feel, and hear from inside of wherever we are. Most people need to change spiritual locations before they can hear truth.

To be effective in speaking to others, we need to see their hearts.

The filters of a person are continually changing. There is a time to speak and a time to be quiet!

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are you a person who is more fixed in the way you respond to life or do your responses depend more on where you are at the moment? Share any thoughts about yourself or others who fit more into this category of being spiritually sensitive and thus more unpredictable in their responses.
2. Who do you see in your world that is in more of the brokenness/humility state of life? Do you have any ideas of how you might reach into the lives of those who are open?
3. Who do you see that is reaching out to people in need? What have you done that is effective in changing the lives of others?

Session 2: The Ego

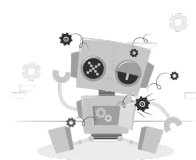
John 3:19-21—“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

What governs the thinking of the people in these verses?

Those in Christ freely admit that they have not done their good by themselves, but with the help of God.

Those not in Christ hate good people because they expose the fact that their own deeds fall short.

Ego governs the thinking of most people. Biblical language would say we have a fascination with self.



Ephesians 5:29—“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”

Love of self is stated as an absolute fact.

Most of what we call self hatred is actually an attempt by a person to make himself better, to make himself perform up to a standard that his ego can feel good about.

As long as there is still some faith in self, that person will talk negatively to himself in an attempt to make himself change his behavior.

Biblical surrender happens when we realize that apart from God, we can do nothing to transform our lives into a better place (*John 15:5*).

As long as we believe that we can improve ourselves, we will not be open to the true gospel.

Most people swing back and forth from self love to self hatred in a kind of heads and tails game.

Both self love and self hatred act as a filter that blocks out our desperate need for a Savior.

Self love can embrace the gospel as long as it is presented as a system of works to do.

Self hatred can embrace the gospel as long as it is presented in a way that honors the power of human repentance.

Biblical repentance requires that we admit that we are powerless to change ourselves.

Biblical repentance declares that the sin that we did came out of the deeper places in our hearts, and that we absolutely need God to get heart change.

Self hatred can seemingly embrace the gospel, while rejecting the absolute need for God’s help to be able to change.

Most people are not willing to embrace the absolute need for God until life is not working.

People who cling to their victim status cannot receive the gospel.

Brokenness can become a way of life, a way of manipulating others for help instead of being a launching pad for change.

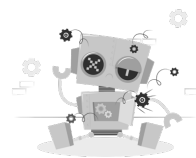
To receive from God, we need to know how much we need Him and then make room for Him.

Humility is the key.

True humility recognizes the need to receive from outside of self.

Humility recognizes that because of the grace of God, we are without excuse!

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).



Questions:

1. Share an example of a time this last week when you were in an up or “heads” position in life. Next share a time when you were more down on yourself.
2. What common beliefs do many people hold that make repentance ineffective? Can you think of times when you have handed things off to God in a way that was effective? What made that repentance work?
3. Why does victim status block the help that might have been given by God? How can we help others move from a place of being a victim to a place where they can receive help?

Session 3: Open Discussion

This session will be a time of application of the principles learned so far. Also, since David works in recovery and working with those struggling with wounds, feel free to ask any questions about how to better minister to those struggling in any of these more difficult areas.

Session 4: The Receiving Gospel

John 1:12-13—“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 6:44—“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Most people are open to a gospel that strokes the ego, but that kind of gospel does not have the power to bring change in the hearts of people.

Lasting change starts with understanding of the law of sin and death (*Rom. 8:2*).

Generational influence (*Ex. 20:5-6*) is a spiritual reality.

Life experience pours a spiritual influence out on us.

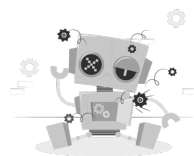
We are spiritual receivers.

Every time we sin, we have the tendency to do that same sin again, and worse (*John 8:34*).

Apart from God and godly people reaching out to us, we cannot find our way to God.

The spiritual posture of receiving is humility. We can’t achieve godly spirituality on our own.

The spiritual place of receiving is to actively seek Him. We must do our part.



As a nation, we have adopted an “I can do it by myself” motto. This is based on pride and rejects the need to receive (*James 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:5*).

Questions:

1. The way we win them is the way we will keep them. What healthy messages can we send to others to attract them to the gospel, that also will work later to grow them up in the gospel?
2. What are some of the negative outside influences that have made your life more difficult spiritually? What are some of the positive influences that have helped build your spiritual life?
3. On a typical week, what does your seeking of God look like? Are you attentive to and thankful for what God is pouring into you? Do you tend to focus more on your own efforts toward growth?

Malachi 4:6—“And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

I believe the greatest hope for our nation is to understand this need for fathering.

Biblical fathering embraces both humility and the receiving model.

Fathering is about mentoring. It includes giving and receiving and is not limited to natural fathers, but is to be done by men and women, old and young.

Ephesians 6:4—“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Biblical fathering is not overly vertical but comes alongside and encourages.

The most powerful person in the room is the most trusted person in the room.

Biblical fathering lays the foundations of safe and belonging first.

Unless it is a God moment, people won’t truly listen in a way that generates faith until the safe, belonging, and trust layers are in place.

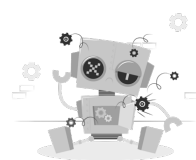
Trust involves a person being willing to obey before the understanding is fully present.

Most of the time, obedience has to happen before there is understanding (*Ps. 119:100*).

Trust is the vehicle by which we receive, by which we spiritually drink in from the outside.

NOTE: You can trust every person to respond according to his character!

The education model believes that information will empower people to change.



Information tends to send people back into a place of “I can do this.” Pride pushes away the grace of God and eventually creates a deeper place of brokenness (*1 Cor. 8:1*).

Fathering nurtures, covers, protects, and provides. In our broken world, it will take a higher level of involvement to see lives changed!

Questions:

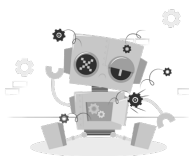
1. Think about relationships where you have either given trust or received trust. Did you place trust in a good place? Or did you get burned? Where there was a positive trust relationship, what made it work?
2. Think about the people who have had the most positive impact in your life. What about that person caused him/her to have that greater impact? What can you learn from how that person treated you?

Other Topics if Time Allows:

- Normal.
- Conscience.
- Heart change.
- Self-deception.

You can access the Spiritual Foundations: Step by Step series on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/livefreemin. Under the playlists, look for Spiritual Foundations.

Our website for all activities is livefreeministries.com. Our website for the addiction recovery work we do is omegaprojectks.com.



A Deeper Probe Toward Accountability, Trust, and Transformation

Accountability is a Baby Step Toward Trust

Who do you believe that God has called you to be? What are you doing to develop that area? Do you know how to partner with others in that area, when to step up, and when to take more of a back seat?

Do you believe that you are mostly blind to yourself? Why or why not? How can you move to a place where you have a more accurate understanding of who you really are?

Where are you more sensitive? What offends you or sends you off in a direction that is not one you would have chosen? What can you do to keep these more volatile areas of your life surrendered to God?

Do you believe that you need others? Are you more of an independent person? If so, is that a healthy tendency that allows you to be creative or is it more of an unhealthy tendency because of a fear of depending on others? How can you move toward healthy interdependence with others?

As you think about your normal demeanor, what message does your typical countenance send out to others? What kinds of comments or reactions have you received from others which give you good insight into what you are giving out to others? Our faces speak! Who can you be accountable to or what changes can you make so that the message you send out is more in line with the gospel?

Where are you able to maintain a spiritual consistency of words and actions so that your daily message is truly having a positive impact on others? What can you do to build your total life integrity?

Do others express to you that you are strength to them? What feedback do you have from others that gives you some objective sense of how you are impacting others? How can you grow in being a lifegiver to others?

All lasting change is daily change. Connect with God. Connect with godly people. Receive life. Give away what you have received. What flows through you will stick to you!

